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ABSTRACT

In Florida, the first articulation agreement was made in 1959, guaranteeing the transferability of a set of community college general education courses to the state's universities. A new agreement, accepted by Florida's community colleges and universities in 1971, defined the Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree as a two-year transfer degree. This agreement also established an Articulation Coordination Committee, common course numbering, and a common academic calendar. Subsequent amendments guaranteed A.A. degree students admission to the State University System, and guaranteed the transferability of any course in the system. In order to achieve a common calendar, all 28 community colleges and 9 state universities elected to operate on the semester system. Other statewide efforts to improve articulation include the following: (1) all of the universities and a number of the two-year colleges employ designated articulation officers who coordinate articulation efforts and resolve difficulties in the articulation process; (2) university articulation officers participate in annual visits to community colleges to meet with faculty, administrators, and prospective transfer students; (3) each of the universities publishes articulation manuals for community college counselors to help in advising students on admissions and transfer policies; (4) computerized advisement programs help students develop course plans and determine course requirements; and (5) orientation programs and special scholarships are in place to assist transfer students. The continued success of articulation efforts in Florida in the 1990s will depend upon more extensive faculty-to-faculty relations, and greater involvement by chief executive officers. (PAA)

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Celebrating Leadership for the 21st Century

Challenges of Articulation Between Sectors

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CHALLENGES OF ARTICULATION

(Between Sectors)

Webster defines articulation as the "action or manner of jointing or interrelating." Richard J. Ernst in the Community College Review, Spring 1978, defined articulation as "a more systematic coordination between an educational institution and other educational institutions designed to ensure the efficient and effective movement of students among those institutions, while guaranteeing the students' continuous advancement in learning." For this gathering, I suggest that the definition provided by our mentor, Dr. Lou Bender in Spotlight on the Transfer Function, 1990, is more appropriate. He maintains that ARTICULATION refers to the systematic efforts, processes, or services intended to ensure educational continuity and to facilitate orderly, unobstructed progress between levels or segments of institutions on a statewide, regional, or institution-to-institution basis.

In light of this definition, I will confine my remarks to the systematic efforts, processes, and services between levels of institutions on a statewide base. I propose to examine the efforts, processes, and services in the State of Florida, focusing particularly on the articulation between the 28 community/junior colleges and the nine state universities.

Articulation in Florida is nearing 32 years of age, and contrary to a saying popular in the sixties that I shall

paraphrase, that you cannot trust anyone (anything) over thirty, I believe that you can place complete trust in Florida's articulation efforts.

The first agreement in Florida dates to 1959. In this agreement, called the General Education Agreement, transfer to the universities of all general education courses in a program defined by the community colleges was guaranteed thus precluding the universities requiring any further general education courses. The agreement required 36 semester hours of college credit in the liberal arts and sciences for students working for the baccalaureate degree.

The Joint Task Force on Postsecondary Articulation provided in 1981 Guidelines for Improving Articulation between Community/Junior and Senior Colleges. The major areas of concern expressed by the Joint Task Force will guide my examination of articulation in Florida.

The Joint Task Force was composed of representatives from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers; the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges; the American Council on Education; the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools; the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation; and the National Association of College Admissions Counselors.

Two of the concerns expressed by the Joint Task Force were admissions and transfer of credit. In Florida, a new agreement was accepted by the community colleges and the universities in 1971

(April 5)--soon to be 20 years old. This new agreement reaffirmed the general education agreement of 1959, and defined the Associate of Arts degree as the transfer degree. It also established a common college transcript, called for a common course numbering system, and called for a common calendar, and established the Articulation Coordinating Committee. In subsequent amendments, students who earned the Associate of Arts degree were guaranteed admission into the State University System though not necessarily into the university of their choice.

Some university admissions are restricted since many of the universities have quota limited access programs. These are limited because the programs lack sufficient faculty or physical facilities which prevent the admission of all students who apply. The articulation agreement prescribes that community college transfer students shall have the same opportunity to enroll in university limited access programs as do native university students. The articulation agreement prescribes that the university limited access program selection and enrollment criteria be established and published in catalogs, counseling manuals, and other appropriate publications. In addition, the agreement also requires that a list of programs designated as limited access are filed annually with the Articulation Coordinating Committee. Statistics reveal that community college transfer students are provided the same opportunity to enroll as are the university native students.

The common course number system began in 1976. The Articulation agreement was amended in the early 1980's to include a provision

which guarantees the transferability of any course in the system. The transferred course must be regarded the same as if it had been taken on the university campus. The Articulation agreement has long recognized acceleration mechanisms and has protected the transfer of credits earned through programs such as College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), and the Proficiency Examination Program (PEP), provided the student achieves the state specified cut-off scores on the tests.

One of the charges of the Articulation Coordination Committee is to develop procedures to improve articulation statewide. The Committee first met on September 7, 1971 and examined the issue of grade forgiveness. Grade forgiveness as it applies the A.A. graduate is contained in the statewide agreement. (Interestingly, in studies conducted on students who use the forgiveness policies and who subsequently transfer, the statistics reveal that generally those students graduate from the university at a rate comparable to that of the students who do not use the policy).

In addition to establishing a common transcript, progress is also being made on the electronic transmission of transcripts to the universities from the major area feeder community colleges.

The Joint Task Force on Postsecondary Articulation also expressed concern about the area of curriculum, particularly about what steps could be taken to avoid loss of time and credit by students who transfer during a period of curriculum change. The articulation agreement prescribes that the university catalog in

effect at the time of a student's initial collegiate enrollment shall govern upper division prerequisites, provided the student maintains continuous enrollment as defined in the particular University catalog.

A common calendar is now a reality. For many years, twenty-seven of the twenty-eight community colleges operated on the semester calendar; the remaining community college and the nine state universities operated on the quarter calendar. As one can readily see, this created problems for the transfer students. Particularly in the spring quarter since the beginning of the spring quarter at the universities did not coincide with the ending of any term at the community colleges. Now, all state institutions in Florida operate on the semester system permitting the orderly, unobstructed progress between levels of institutions on a statewide basis.

To enhance the statewide articulation efforts, the universities early established community college relations officers (generally known as articulation officers). These articulation officers were described by H. Phillips, October 1978, in an articulation seminar at the University of South Florida, as constituting one of the most effective articulation tools. "They work to reduce the likelihood of articulation problems, and they have effective ways of working out most of the problems which individual students encounter after transfer. They have indeed been effective ombudsmen. Provision has been made for the designation of individuals as articulation officers in the community/junior

colleges. But, thus far only a minimum of colleges have identified their articulation officers. Designation of the remaining articulation officers would definitely enhance the communication thus providing better articulation.

The university articulation officers participate in an annual community college tour throughout the state. Generally, during the tour at the colleges, the articulation officers meet with prospective transfer students during the morning hours; and in the afternoon, meet with community college administrators and faculty to introduce new programs, update the colleges personnel on "what's new at ..." and to meet in groups or individually to discuss concerns expressed by the college faculty. In addition, the articulation officers also visit the community colleges in their regions on scheduled bases to meet with students, faculty, and administrators. They also coordinate faculty to faculty meetings and work on their own campuses to promote programs mandated by the agreement and to develop new programs and policies to facilitate articulation. Many of the university articulation officers provide newsletters to the counselors and other interested personnel several times per year. Of particular note are the Knight Line from the University of Central Florida, the Seminole Smoke Signals from Florida State University, and the Compass from the University of West Florida. In addition, these university articulation officers are involved in the local Alumni Chapters of Phi Theta Kappa, the national community/junior college honor fraternity. One of the main objectives of the Phi Theta Kappa Chapter is to assist

the transfer student. Generally, members of the alumni chapters serve as hosts during special days for junior college students.

The Joint Task Force on Postsecondary Articulation also expressed concern about advising and counseling. One issue centered on what information is needed by college advisors and counselors in their work with prospective transfer students, and how can this information be obtained. Each of the Universities publishes Counseling Manuals for Community College Counselors which provide a wealth of information about university transfer admissions. Diann Zeldman reported in "Articulation and Transfer in Florida," (1982) that it is understandable why these manuals are referred to as the "advisor's bible." They are easy to read, precise, and accurate. Included in a common format are program by program maps of what the students should take at the lower division level and what they should expect to take at the upper division level in order to earn the baccalaureate degree. Each program page lists a contact person and a telephone number for each of the listed majors. Updated counseling manuals are presently distributed to all community/junior college campuses at the beginning of each academic year. There is presently a movement toward the creation of a state university systemwide counseling manual.

In the mid-eighties, funding was provided by the Legislature to enhance computerized advisement programs. The first program, SASS (Student Academic Support System) is an academic audit system in the universities which provides students with an academic plan

according to their selected major. The second program, SOLAR, is a student on-line advising and articulation system. SOLAR contains in its database both the community college lower division requirements and the university admissions requirements and course requirements. With SOLAR provides the community college students the opportunity to determine early, by selecting the university they wish to attend, the courses and requirements they need in order to earn the baccalaureate degree. Florida Statutes provide that in the future SASS and SOLAR be articulated.

A second issue in the area of advising and counseling expressed by the Task Force centered on the question: what special orientations do transfer students need and how may they be effectively provided? Each university provides an orientation program for its transfer students. The transfer students have the opportunity to register for classes, meet with advisors, and be introduced to the universities procedures and services. Some universities provide transfer student sessions exclusively for transfer students from nearby community colleges. Of particular note is that provided by the University of Central Florida exclusively for Valencia Community College Transfer students.

The universities and community/junior colleges engage in other services. To name but a few, the universities provide scholarships through their "Two-plus-Two" programs; ROTC classes being taught on both the University and community college campuses; articulation agreements to recognize the Associate of Science as a transfer degree; and for most, the utilization of joint centers where the

lower division courses are provided by the community college, and the upper division courses provided by the university. In this last instance, students in many locations such as Ft. Walton Beach, Daytona Beach, and Ft. Myers can earn baccalaureate degrees without leaving their respective areas.

Since it seems that Florida has been and has remained on the "cutting edge" of articulation, then one might ask--What are the issues?

One issue has been that of the foreign language requirement. When the legislature passed the foreign language admissions requirement, perhaps unknowingly they created a dangerous precedent. With the passage of the legislation, it became possible for a student to graduate with Associate of Arts degree and not be admitted to the University; a conflict between the agreement and the law. This issue has lingered since 1987 but due to the outstanding efforts of all concerned and the excellent channels of communication between the community colleges, the universities and the Department of Education, it appears that an amicable resolution has appeared.

What then are suggestions for the future? Definitely, the players must continue their roles. Here, Dr. Bender has also provided insight. He identified the primary players in articulation efforts before the 1960's as the registrars and admissions officers. During the 1960's the societal requirements and attitudes changed; higher education is now deemed a right. Thus, during the 1970's & 1980's, the primary players were

identified as the articulation officers carrying out their ombudsmanship role. Dr. Bender contends that the evidence suggests that faculty-to-faculty will be the key players in the 1990's if articulation problems are to be seriously and successfully addressed. I support his contention and offer that perhaps, if articulation efforts are to be continually enhanced, the Chief Executive Officers of the various institutions must assume an increased active role.

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